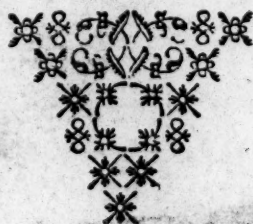


A REVIEW OF AN
E S S A Y
UPON
P R A Y E R,
INTITLED,

Some THOUGHTS on RELIGIOUS
WORSHIP, particularly in Publick.

By a Moderate Protestant Dissenter.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. WILKIE, in St. Paul's Church-Yard;
and sold by A. TOZER, at Exeter; and T. CADELL,
at Bristol. M.DCC.LXV.

[Price Sixpence.]

A. H. W. 27 of 1871

1871

1871

1871

1871

1871

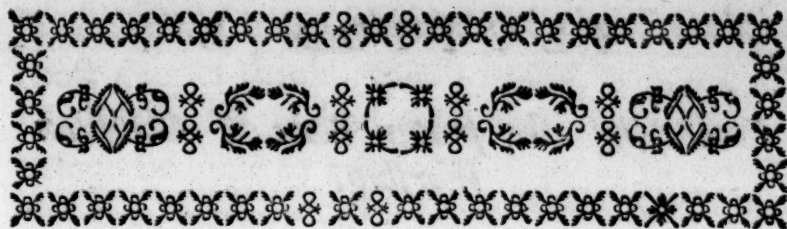
1871

1871

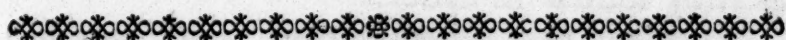
1871

1871

1871



A REVIEW OF AN
 E S S A Y
 U P O N
 P R A Y E R.



I N the *candid and judicious* Essay upon Prayer, as the Editors are pleased to call it, (a) which we have taken into consideration, the Author hath delivered his *Thoughts on religious Worship* under the following Heads, viz. the proper *Rule*, the *primitive Mode*, and the *most eligible Manner* of Christian Worship. Which *three* things we shall distinctly consider in the same number of Sections.

(a) See the concluding Monthly Paper called the LIBRARY.

SECTION I.

*Concerning the proper Rule of Christian
Worship.*

“THE best *Rubric*, says this Writer,
“for regulating the religious Wor-
“ship of Christians, is that of the New Tes-
“tament, and consists of these few general
“Rules, &c.” Without enquiring, at pre-
sent, whether the *Six Rules* he mentions,
are all that are laid down in the New Testa-
ment for regulating Christian Worship, we
shall make some cursory Remarks upon them,
as they follow in order.

I. *They, that worship God, must worship
him in spirit, and in truth.* John iv. 24. —
Now, this Rule is no prescription of a pub-
lick stated Form of Prayer, but very consist-
ent with Free Prayer, our Author himself be-
ing judge. For he approves, and recom-
mends the frequent use of *Extempore Prayer*,
in *some* part of the Service. And certainly he
will allow, that in *every* part of the Service,
Christians ought to *worship God in spirit and
in truth.*

II. *Let all things be done to edifying.* 1 Cor.
xiv. 26. — The same observation may be
here repeated. Besides, this Rule relates to
publick *Preaching*, as well as *Praying*. Ver.
23—31. But all things may be done to
edifying,

edifying, in point of *instruction*, without the *same Sermon* being always preached, and, as most people think, much better by a *variety* of Discourses. And why then may not all things be done to edifying, in point of *Devotion* too, without the *same Form of Prayer* being constantly repeated?

III. *Let all things be done decently, and in order.* Ver. 40. — The *decency and order*, spoken of by St. Paul, have no relation to a publick stated Form of Worship; though some Writers, with more zeal than *judgement*, have recommended such a Form under that same notion. Because Free Prayer was publicly used, at that time, in the worshipping Assemblies of Christians; as evidently appears from the *disorders* committed in the Church of *Corinth*, and the *Rules* which the Apostle lays down for correcting those disorders, in the method of conducting publick Worship. For, on the contrary supposition, such Rules had been as unnecessary as those disorders themselves were impracticable. And yet, it is worthy of special observation, that St. Paul did not recommend a publick stated Form of Worship, as a proper expedient in that case; but only gave directions about exercising their gifts *decently, and in order* (b).

IV. *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Col. iii. 17. — This Rule determines nothing about the question in hand. For Christians may

(b) See Dr. TAYLOR's Scripture Account of Prayer.

may pray in the Name of Christ, whatever mode of Worship they follow.

V. *Let all your things be done in Charity.* 1 Cor. xvi. 14. — If this Rule hath any relation to religious Worship, it respects not the outward mode or form of Worship, but the inward frame of the Worshiper. And Christians, using different modes of Worship, may have charity one for another. But if a charitable union of hearts requires an uniformity of Worship, it must be wrong in any persons to set up one Liturgy against another.

VI. *After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father, who art in heaven, &c.* Matth. vi. 9—13. — Which words, be it observed, are thus introduced. Ver. 7—9. *But when ye pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much-speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.* After this MANNER therefore pray ye, &c;^{that} is, in a few plain, but full and comprehensive words. It appears then, that in the words before us, Christ only directed and prescribed the *right manner* of praying, in opposition to the *vain repetitions*, and *much-speaking*, used by the *Heathens*. And that the words were so understood by his disciples then present; chap. v. 1. and not considered by them as a prescribed Form of Prayer, is manifest from their asking him *afterwards*
upon

upon another occasion to *teach* them to *pray*. For, such a request had been needless, not to say impertinent, on supposition Christ had given them *before* a stated Form of Prayer for constant use.

This leads us to consider the words referred to, by way of parallel, in the Gospel of St. Luke. Chap. xi. ver. 1, 2. *And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in Heaven, &c.* — Now here, as upon that former occasion, Christ had taught his disciples in what *manner* they should pray; so upon this occasion he may be conceived, according to the opinion of the learned Grotius and others, (c) to suggest to them proper *matter* of Prayer, without prescribing a set Form of words for their constant and daily use. And so, “he did not teach them what *words* to “use in Prayer, but what *things* to pray for;” (d) as probably JOHN also had *taught his disciples*, adapting his instructions about the subject-matter of Prayer to their present circumstances. (For, it is not rational to think, that either the disciples of JOHN, or of JESUS, had never learned to pray before; when it

(c) Vid. POL. Synopsis in loc.

(d) Non enim Verba, &c. S. AUGUSTIN. lib. de magist. Op. Tom. I. pag. 115. Edit. Paris.

it was a custom among the *Jews*, worshipping in the Court of the Temple at the time of Incense, for every one to make their own Prayers; as we see in the case of the *Publican* and *Pharisee* (*e*.) And upon a strict examination it might appear, that the several *petitions*, contained in the words, are in a very peculiar manner suited to the state and circumstances of persons and things at that time (*f*).

Upon the whole then, there seems to be no ground for supposing, that the *Lord's-Prayer*, as it is commonly called, was given by Christ as a set Form of words for constant, unvaried, and universal use (though the words themselves may be used in Prayer, as well as any other scripture expressions, proper for Christian Worship.) For, the contrary may be strongly argued from what he said to his disciples, but a little before his death. John xvi. 24. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name*. From whence it follows, either that the disciples of Christ had *then* never used the Lord's-Prayer, as a set Form; or that when they so used it, they did not pray *in his Name*; and consequently that use of the words, if ever introduced, was to be discontinued after his Ascension, when they were to pray in his Name, by his own order and appoint-

(*e*) Luke i. 10. xviii. 10—13. See PRIDEAUX'S *Connect.* Vol. I. pag. 389.

(*f*) See Dr. BARROW on the Lord's-Prayer, and BOYSE'S Remarks on the Bp. of Derry, Ch. II.

appointment. ver. 26. In fact, the first Christian Writer, who mentions the Lord's-Prayer being used as a *Form*, is TERTULLIAN, about the end of the *second*, or the beginning of the *third* Century. JUSTIN MARTYR, an earlier Writer, is silent upon this head; tho' he hath given us a particular account of the Christian Worship, and the method of conducting it in his time. (g)

But the Writer, whose *Thoughts on religious Worship* we have now under consideration, says, "The *plural* expression, in the "beginning, and subsequent Petitions, seems "to point it out as a *social Prayer*, and is a "strong presumptive argument, that it was "asked and given as a Form of *Common Prayer*."—As if the Disciples could not *ask* and Christ *give* them directions about the *matter* of social Prayer, but the Directory must needs be a set Form! Besides, it should be remembred, that when our Lord *first* gave his Disciples these instructions about Prayer, he was then discoursing of *private* Prayer, and Closet-Devotion. Mat. vi. 5, 6. Which quite spoils the *presumptive* Argument from hence, for a Form of *Common Prayer*.

Having now considered the *six* Rules, of which this Writer says the Rubric of Christian Worship, namely *that* of the New Testament,

B

tament,

(g) Vid. TERTUL. de Orat. & J. MARTYR. Apol. II.

tament, consists ; we shall take the liberty of adding *some other* Rules which may have escaped his notice.

In the New Testament we are directed to pray with *all prayer* and *supplication*, and for *all men* ; *in every thing to make known our requests to God*. Eph. vi. 18. Philip. iv. 6. 1 Tim. ii. 1, &c. “ Now (says a judicious and learned Writer, remarking upon these or the like passages of scripture, (b) ’tis “ evident there is a vast *variety* of occasions “ and emergencies, in which we should apply ourselves to God by Prayer, which it “ cannot be expected *any* prescribed *Forms* “ should exactly suit.” From whence he concludes, “ That the general *Rules* of scripture (i. e. concerning *Prayer*) cannot be “ duly observed by those, that pray no other- “ wise than by a set Form of words.”—But to return to our Essay-writer.

“ With regard (says he) to any other Petitions, which we have occasion to offer “ up to God, and other parts of religious “ worship &c. there being no *particular express precept* upon record in the *New Testament*, Christians seem to be left to their “ own liberty, reason, and experience, every “ One, and every Society of them who join “ together in the Worship of God, to take “ the

(b) BOYSE’S Remarks on the Bp. of DERRY.

“ *the way they judge or find to be the best,*” &c.

In answer to which it may be observed,
 (1) “ If no *one way* or mode of Worship is positively enjoined, by any *particular express precept, upon record in the New Testament*; then, it is granted, no one way or mode of Worship can be *absolutely* necessary for all Christians, at all times, and under all circumstances; as it would be on the contrary supposition.” But this determines not the main Question depending. For,

(2) “ From hence it follows not that every mode of Worship is alike indifferent in itself; or, that one mode of Worship is really, in it's own nature, no better than another.” This is no good consequence; our Author himself being Judge. For he would persuade the *Protestant Dissenters* to alter and change their present way of Worship for another, which he recommends as a *better*; tho' he cannot pretend it is required, or enjoined by any “ *particular express precept, upon record in the New Testament.*”

(3) “ If any one mode or way of Worship is really better than another, the preference seems to be justly due to the *primitive mode,*” whatever it was; and that way of worshipping God, which was practised by Christ and his Apostles, and all their pious Followers, the whole army of Saints and Martyrs, in the first and purest ages of Christianity.

tianity. For, we appeal to the reason and conscience of every sensible and honest man, who calls himself a Christian, whether it would not be very wrong to suppose, that the glorious Founders of the Christian Church and Worship, did not worship God themselves, and so by their example taught others to Worship him, in the best way and manner. If so; then their practice is a good *precedent* for Christians to follow in all succeeding ages, as a sure guide, and a safe rule of direction in this case; a *Rule*, which well deserved a place amongst the other Rules, laid down before, for regulating the religious Worship of Christians. To come then to the Point in view.

(4) All Christians have a right, or rather are obliged to judge for themselves (and consequently to follow their own judgment) *what* way and mode of Worship is most conformable to the Scripture Plan, and the primitive Pattern; and also, what circumstances will warrant a departure from it in any Case. Under this restriction, and with this limitation, it may be granted, “every one, and “every Society of them who join together in “the Worship of God, are left to their own “liberty, reason, and experience, to *take* “*the way* they judge, or find to be the best.” But, we can by no means think it allowable, for any Persons to treat that sacred and venerable pattern of Christian Worship, as a
trivial

trivial thing, or as a matter of mere indifference, and worthy of no superior regard ; and so lightly depart from it without any necessity, or just and lawful occasion. For, this, we fear, is taking an undue *liberty*, which may rather be called by the name of *levity*; to use no harsher term.

But so much, at present, for the proper *Rule* of Christian Worship, which may receive some elucidation from the next Question.

SECTION II.

Concerning the primitive Mode of Christian Worship.

WE now proceed to consider the Author's *Thoughts* on the way of worshipping God in the first ages of Christianity; and what is the most eligible manner still, whether *precomposed Forms*, or *extempore Addresses*. Which two Questions, we shall dispatch in this and the following Section. And so here we begin with the *first*. Now, concerning *the way of worshipping God, in the first ages of Christianity*, this Writer observes, — “ that *extempore Prayer*, and *Praise* too, “ were *certainly* used (sometimes at least) by “ the primitive Christians, as well as from “ the begining of the world, as part of their “ Worship in public ; as appears from *Acts* “ iv. 24—30. So very *probably* were *pre-* “ *composed*

“ *composed Forms* also at other times, or in
 “ other parts of Worship ; the Lord’s-Prayer
 “ at least, and their *Hymns* of praise, &c.
 “ These *possibly* were not all of them in Me-
 “ tre, or sung in set Tunes, but repeated
 “ with loud and chearful voices, &c. And
 “ I am *inclined to think*, the name of *Litur-*
 “ *gy* was first given to these precomposed
 “ *Hymns*, &c.” — Upon all which we have
 the following Observations to lay before the
 Reader.

(1.) We have here an acknowledged *cer-*
tainty, “ that *extempore Prayer*, or praying
 “ without a stated precomposed Form” (as
 these things are contradistinguished by our
 Author. Which distinction we approve,
 under the notion of *extempore Prayer* com-
 prehending all Free Prayer, as opposed to
 public stated Forms) “ was used by the *pri-*
 “ *mitive Christians*, sometimes at least, as
 “ part of their Worship in public.” And if
sometimes, why not at *other* times, and so at
all times ; unless they were better qualified
 to pray extempore on *sudden emergencies*, than
 when they had more time for premeditation ?
 (And by the way, *extempore Prayer* no more
 excludes premeditation, than *extempore Speak-*
ing (i).) Upon this footing, the Christian
 Worship appears to have been fixed in the
 Church of *Corinth* ; as hath been shewed be-
 fore,

(i) Vid. QUINTIL. Instit. Orat. lib. x. Cap. 7.

fore, without any limitation to *sudden* and *extraordinary emergencies*. From whence it may be inferred, that the same way of Worship obtained and took place in other Christian Churches from the beginning.

(2.) The same certainty is not pretended for the use of *precomposed Forms* among the *primitive Christians*, but only a *probability*, without any proof. As to the Lord's-Prayer, we have spoken of *that* before. And in relation to their *Hymns of praise* (or rather Forms of praise (*k*)) if they were *sung*, as both the names, and the *notion* of Hymns in the *primitive Church*, implies and supposes (*l*) the nature of *Psalmody* required that they should be *precomposed*. And against such precomposed Forms we have no objection. But this affects not the present Question concerning Prayer.

(3.) From probabilities he descends to *possibilities*. For, speaking of the Hymns of praise used by the primitive Christians, this Writer says, " These *possibly* were not all of
 " them in Metre, or sung in set Tunes, but
 " composed with some accuracy and ele-
 " gance, and repeated with loud and chear-
 " ful voices, suitably to the subject-matter
 " of them." — But, where this notion of *unmetrical* and *unmusical* Hymns of praise, as
 used

(*k*) Note — *Hymns of praise*, is a tautology. For, *praise* is included in the Idea of an Hymn.

(*l*) See DU VEIL. on ACTS xvi. 25.

used in public Worship by the primitive Christians, and *repeated with loud and chearful voices*, in a sort of wild confusion, had it's rise, or upon what foundation it rests, we could wish to be informed. On occasion of our Saviour's publick Entry into *Jerusalem*, we are told, Matth. xxi. 9. *The multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.* If any one now shall imagine, that this was an "*unmetrical Hymn of praise, repeated with loud and chearful voices;*" let him indulge his own fancy. But the pious *rant* of a multitude, or a mob, is surely a very different thing from the sober, grave, and solemn action of a worshiping Assembly of serious Christians. — We should have suspected, that our Author might ground his singular notion upon Acts iv. 24, &c. but that he hath referred to that instance before, as an *extempore Address*, which therefore as being no precomposed Form, could not be repeated by the People with loud and chearful voices; if there is any weight in the following observation of an impartial Hand.

(*m*) "*It was the Priest, that solely pronounced the publick Prayers without the voices of the People. And indeed it was impossible for the People to respond, since they*"
 " had

(*m*) Lord KING's Enquiry, &c. Part II. Ch. II. Sect. 5.

“ had no fixed public Form of Prayer, except the Lord’s-Prayer, &c. As to their other Prayers, every Bishop, or Minister of a Parish, was left to his own liberty and ability therein.” — However, it hath been supposed by some advocates for a Liturgy (*n*), that the religious Address aforesaid was — “ a precomposed set Form, repeated by the Company.” But all the circumstances of the case plainly shew, that it was an *Extempore Address*; (*o*) as this Writer himself takes it to be; and so we have here no dispute with him.

(4.) Is it possible for any man of common prudence and modesty, to appear in an Argument of this nature, and at the same time be so ignorant of the matter, as not to know the meaning of the word, *Liturgy*? But, how shall we account for what follows, viz. “ And I am *inclined* to *think* the name of “ Liturgy was first given to these precomposed Hymns.” — A strange imagination! What should *incline* this Writer to entertain such a fancy, is a mystery to us; unless, perhaps, he thought the *word*, Liturgy, imports a *work of the People*. But, according to the *notation* of this compound Word, it properly signifies a *public Work*, or Service; (*p*) that is, a Service done not *by* the People, but *for*

C them.

(*n*) BENNET’s brief hist. of Forms, pag. 79, &c.

(*o*) ROBINSON’s Answer to BENNET, pag. 86.

(*p*) Vid. SUIDAS. in Voc.

them. What connexion then hath this Idea, with Hymns of praise, repeated by the *People*, &c. that any man of sense and learning should in the least “*incline* to think the name “ of Liturgy was first given to these precomposed Hymns ?”

To inform this Writer a little better, let us remind him, that the word *Liturgy*, denotes a *Service*, literally a *public Service*. As to the *Verb*, says the learned BEZA, (q) “ No one, “ but moderately skilled in *Greek*, can be “ ignorant that *λειτουργεῖν* is spoken chiefly of “ *public Offices*.” The word *Liturgy*, is indeed of very ancient use, and was applied of old, not only to *sacred*, but *civil* Offices and Ministrations (r). What *State Liturgies*, or publick Services, expressed by that Name, were performed by *particular Persons* in the City of *Athens*, may be seen in the learned POTTER’s account of the *Athenian Magistrates* (s). In the *Ecclesiastical* Stile, the same word is applied to *sacred Ministrations* in general, and to the *administration of the Eucharist* in particular (t). In the *New Testament*, the word *Liturgy* is used to signify the publick Service performed by the Priests, officiating in the daily Ministrations at the Temple (u). In like manner, all the publick Ministrations,

(q) Annot. in Act. xiii. 1, 2.

(r) Vid. ARISTOT. Oeconom. Lib. II.

(s) Archæolog. Græc. B. I. Ch. 15.

(t) Vid. SUICER in Voc.

(u) Luke i. 23.

strations, in the Christian Church, properly come under the notion and denomination of Liturgy. So we read, (w) *There were in the Church, that was at Antioch, certain Prophets and Teachers, &c. And as they ministered to the Lord, &c* (x). On which occasion, we presume, it will be granted, the *Prophets and Teachers ministered*; i.e. performed *Liturgy*, or publick Service; and not the body of the People, by repeating such Hymns as have been mentioned.

And now, is it not amazing to think, what could *incline* our Author to “*think*, the name “ of *Liturgy* was first given to these pre-
“ composed Hymns, and that (as he further
“ adds) the ancient, natural, affectionate
“ manner of repeating them, dwindled at
“ last into the mere formal modern manner
“ of *Chanting*.”—With regard to both which Particulars, at once, we take leave to observe.

(5.) All, that he hath advanced upon this head, is mere *supposition*, or rather divination. And, to do him justice, he does not deliver it as *some* of his *Thoughts on religious Worship*, but only as what he is *inclined* to think. So that in the process of his Argument, we see, how he gently slides, and gradually sinks lower and lower. For, finding no *certainty* on the side of his Hypothesis for *precomposed Forms*, &c; he takes up with

C 2

pro-

(w) Acts xiii. 1, 2.

(x) λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν.

probabilities; then he comes down to *possibilities*; and last of all, he descends to an *inclination* to think; which is somewhat short of *Thought* itself. Therefore it may be proper for us to wait a while, till he hath fixed his thought, and formed his sentiments fully upon this part of his Argument. In the mean time, if he support the character of a *candid and judicious* Writer, we may hope that upon *Second thoughts*, which the *Proverb* says, *are the best*, he may no longer “*incline to*” think, that the name of *Liturgy* was first “*given to these precomposed Hymns,*” he speaks of; unless his inclination, to think *one way*, should prevail against his judgement for thinking *another way*. — As to *Chanting*; what he calls the *more formal*, persons that have an *ear*, may rather account the *more regular*, “*modern manner of Chanting.*” But, if what he represents as “*the ancient, natural, affectionate manner of repeating Hymns of praise,*” is the *best* and most proper way of repeating them; on that supposition, why should they ever be repeated in any other way? And why should the formal manner of *singing* Hymns and Psalms be practised in Christian Worship at all? Nevertheless this religious practice hath obtained from the beginning of the Christian Church; and so it is as *ancient* as the Church itself (y). And let this

(y) Matth. xxvi. 30. Acts xvi. 25. Eph. v. 19, &c.
PLIN.

this Writer, if he can, find out a more ancient, natural, affectionate manner of repeating Hymns, or forms of Praise, by a *number* of voices together, than in the way of *Psalmody*; whatever may be said of *Chanting*.

(6.) In what follows we agree with our Author, saying — “ For many Centuries the
 “ Bishop, or Pastor of every Congregation
 “ of Christians, seems to have had the com-
 “ posing, or chusing of the Prayers and
 “ Forms of Praise left to him.” Only we must add, that in the *first ages* of Christianity, there was no publick stated Form of Prayer (unless we must except the Lord’s-Prayer) for any thing, that hath yet been made appear to the contrary; but every Pastor had the *conceiving*, or the composing of his own publick Prayers, as well as Sermons, *according to his ability* (z); and so he could vary them at discretion, and suitably to every occasion. This, in short, is our notion of the *primitive Worship*, in the Christian Church. And this notion is confirmed, by what our Author himself hath observed, concerning the *third* Council of *Carthage*, which was held towards the end of the *fourth* Century. For, had it been usual, even at *that* time, for persons of proper Ministerial abilities, to pray by a publick stated Form, they might

PLIN. Jun. Lib. x. Ep. 97. EUSEB. Eccl. Hist. Lib. II. Cap. 17, &c.

(z) J. MARTYR. Apol. II.

might have saved themselves all the trouble of revising and correcting the Prayers of their *weaker* Brethren (as mentioned by this Writer) by giving them a Copy of their own Liturgy.

These Observations, upon the *primitive Mode* of Christian Worship, we shall conclude with the following Remark, and leave the Reader to make his own Reflections upon it. “ In the persecutions under DIOCLES-
“ SIAN and his Associates” (which, by the way, continued to rage about the end of the *third* Century, or somewhat later) “ though
“ a strict enquiry was made after the Books
“ of *Scripture*, and other things belonging
“ to the Church, which were often deliver-
“ ed up by the *Traditores* to be burnt; yet
“ we never read of any *Ritual Books*, or *Books*
“ of *Divine Service*, delivered up among
“ them ;” says a learned Antiquary (a).

SECTION III.

Concerning the most eligible Manner of Christian Worship.

BY way of transition to this Question, viz. “ What is the most *eligible Man-
“ ner* of worshiping God still?” the same things are repeated in other words, that the
Author

(a) BINGHAM. Antiq. &c. B. xiii. Ch. V. Sect. 3.

Author had said before, concerning the *Liberty* which every person, and every Society of Christians have of judging and chusing for themselves, what way of Worship is most for their edification. Now, this Liberty of judging and chusing for themselves, is (as was hinted before) freely allowed to all Christians, under certain limitations and restrictions already mentioned (*b*). But on supposition, that *one* manner of worshipping God is better than another, as the Question in hand seems to imply; still we must insist, that the way of worshipping God, which was used by Christ and his Apostles, &c. was the most *eligible manner then*, and consequently in itself is the most eligible manner *now*, of worshipping God. For, to suppose, either that Christ and his Apostles did not rightly *understand* the nature of religious Worship; or that the nature of religious Worship is now *altered* and changed from what it was in *their* days; these are suppositions not to be admitted, by any sensible and serious Christian; the one being *impious*, and the other *absurd*. It should be considered, that all *divine Institutions* are originally perfect in their *kind*; and so they neither want, nor admit, like *human arts and sciences*, the improvements and refinements of after ages. Therefore, unless we have a right to think wrong, no Christians can have a right to think or *judge* any Mode or Man-
ner

(*b*) See the Close of the *first* Section.

ner of worshipping God *more eligible in itself*, than the good old way, which was practised by Christ and his Apostles, and all the primitive Christians in the first and purest ages. For certainly *this* would be thinking wrong, to say no worse, but only that such a way of thinking discovers little *candor and judgment*.

Thus much being premised, let us now attend to our Author, saying, "*Extempore Prayer and Thanksgiving* too, without doubt, may be most suitable to many *sudden* and *extraordinary emergencies*, where the person officiating hath ability for it. But, in *ordinary*, and especially in the *Praises of God* for his *known* Attributes, Works, and common Providences; and for the Redemption of mankind, and the calling of the Gentiles; *precomposed* Forms must needs have very much the advantage, because they may be drawn up by the best Hands, &c." — In answer to which, and all that follows of the same strain, it is obvious to remark,

(1.) Notwithstanding his concession in favour of Free, or Extempore Prayer, the visible design of this Writer is to depreciate that ancient and venerable Mode of Worship, by giving the preference to *precomposed* Forms in *ordinary*, and limiting the use of *Extempore Prayer*, to *sudden* and *extraordinary emergencies*, without any authority. We say, *with-*
out

out any authority; because if Extempore Prayer was used by the Apostles on a sudden emergency, in a case referred to before, Acts iv. 24—30. it follows not, that the use of it in those days was confined to such occasions; for the contrary hath been shewed with a sufficient degree of evidence (c). As for that saving clause — “Where the person officiating hath ability for it;” it is presumed the Gift of Prayer, with due cultivation, is attainable by any persons that have proper capacities and qualifications for the Ministerial Office. And accordingly this Writer himself says, — “Ministers, where *Forms* are admitted, and made use of, should use themselves frequently to *Extempore Worship*,” which implies and supposes an *ability* for it in the person officiating.

(2.) God’s *known* Attributes, Works, &c. were doubtless the *same* in the Apostles Days, that they are now at this very time. And yet there is no proof, or appearance, that they made use of any *precomposed* Forms in *praising* God for them; except in the way of *Psalmody*; the nature of which rendered such Forms necessary; but the same necessity cannot be pleaded for any other set Forms of Devotion.

(3.) This Writer’s grand Mistake lies in not rightly distinguishing betwixt the *inward* exercise, and the *outward* expressions
D of

(c) See Sect. I. Rule III. and Sect. II. Remark 1.

of divine Worship. Undoubtedly, we ought to worship and praise God for his known *Attributes, Works, &c.* always with the same *Devotion*; but it is not therefore necessary, that we should always do it with the same *Words*, though chosen with the greatest care and exactness. It is true, the *Heathens* imagined there was a kind of charm in using a certain set Form of Words (*d*); but we are forbid to be *like unto them*. And we cannot but fear, that the spirit of primitive Piety, and of true Devotion, is sunk very low amongst us at this day, if it wants to be raised and supported by any such *curious arts*. However that be, we cannot discern the force of his Argument that “precomposed Forms” must needs have very much the advantage,” viz. “*because* they may be drawn up by the “best Hands, and with the greatest care and “correctness.” For (not to mention that a dispute may arise in this case, *which* are the best Hands) with whatever *care* and *correctness* they are drawn up, still they are *but* Forms; and as such (especially the more they appear to be laboured and studied) may become by constant use, and frequent repetitions, *less advantageous*, upon the whole, for maintaining the life and spirit of Devotion, than Free Prayer, though delivered with less accuracy of stile and language (*e*).

(4.) As

(*d*) Vid. PLIN. Nat. hist. Lib. xxviii. Cap. 2.

(*e*) See ROBINSON'S Ans. to BENNET, pag. 441, &c.

(4.) As this Writer's *thoughts* on religious Worship, seem to be more intent and fixed upon the outward *Form*, than the inward *Frame* of Devotion, so we apprehend his Discourse here hath too great a tendency to mislead the *thoughts* of the People, and to divert their attention from the right Object, by fixing their minds so much upon a critical exactness of external Worship. Is not this infusing a false taste, and a wrong temper in religious Duties? Let the People cultivate in themselves a serious spirit, and a true devotional frame of mind; let them learn to *read their own hearts*, and to order their affections aright in the Worship of God; and *this*, we humbly think, will contribute more to their edification, than having their eyes dazzled with the polished shine of curious and correct Forms drawn up by the best Hands. In the *best hearts* it is that Devotion must live; and there it will live and flourish, not only *without*, but, as we imagine, much better than *with* such scrupulous nicety and exactness about the exterior part of religious Worship. A Soul, deeply engaged with God, will not stand so much upon *Formalities*. And let it be remembered, that — “to serve God with our best,” is not to serve him with our *best words*, and finest expressions, but with our best thoughts and warmest affections.

(5.) In relation to what is further urged, for a Pastor's recommending precomposed Forms to his *flock*, viz. "that the People
 " have an *opportunity* given them thereby of
 " *considering every part, &c.*" — Our answer is *this*—It is an awful Service for a Minister to speak to the People, as the *mouth of God*, as well as his speaking to God, as the *mouth of the People*. And is it necessary to their *edification*, that the Pastor of a Congregation should deliver to his flock a Copy of every *Sermon* before he preaches it, that so they may have an opportunity given them of considering every part of it, whether they can *understand* it, and *assent* thereunto? If not; why should the like measure as to *Prayer*, be deemed necessary to the People's Devotion in publick Worship? Besides, if the People have any material objections to make, they can more easily find redress in those Congregations where Free Prayer is used, than in any other Societies, where set Forms are once introduced. But if both Minister and People did seriously cultivate the *gift*, and the *spirit* of Prayer, as it well becomes all Christians to do; as little occasion would generally be *given* by the former, as *taken* by the latter, for any *material objections*, with respect to *matter, method, or expression* in Prayer.

(6.) If we attend to the distinction made before, betwixt *internal* and *external* Worship,

ship, we shall readily discern the *force*, or rather the *fallacy* of the two following Observations, in the *Essay upon Prayer* before us.

(1.) "If a Form be good, it is never the worse for having been made use of before, ever so often, or ever so long." — True; considered *as* a Form, or a certain composition of *Words*, and *Sentences*; for, the words and sentences will always remain in the same connexion, order, and arrangement. But, if the *goodness* of a thing is to be estimated by its *fitness*; to answer the *end* for which it is designed; then (we say nothing here of *divine Forms*, if any such there be, whose *authority* may always give them sufficient weight to command the veneration of religious Minds) the best, and most correct Forms, that any *Men* can compose, may, like all other human things, be the worse for wearing. Because the constant repetition of the same thing is apt to make it less moving and affecting; and therefore not so serviceable, as it might be at first, to engage the attention, and excite the affections of the Soul (*f*).

(2.) "The Perfection of Worship does not consist in having the same things *differently* expressed at different times, but most properly expressed, at all times." — But, what if the Perfection of Worship does not properly consist either in having the *same things* always

(*f*) See Examination of Preface to the Christian Common-Prayer-Book, pag. 59, &c.

always expressed; or much less in any one particular and precise Manner of expressing them? Why then our Essay-Writer, in giving his *Thoughts on religious Worship*, hath been all the while talking in the dark, without any clear ideas of the grave, weighty, and solemn Subject he hath taken in hand. Consider Man—Does not the chief excellency and perfection of religious Worship consist, in the sincere, fervent, and affectionate Devotion of an humble adoring Soul, lying prostrate before the *throne of Grace*?—But this Devotion of the Heart is worshipping God in *Spirit and in Truth*, according to the Christian Rubric (g). And as to *outward Worship*, which is intended to be an expression, exercise, and improvement of this inward and *true Worship*, it's Perfection consists in the apt *tendency* it hath to answer that good and great design. Therefore, if a *variety* of matter and expression is the best Mean to excite and assist the Soul in Devotion, as many think, judging by their own *Reason* and *Experience*, then *that Way* and Manner of Worship must be the most perfect in kind; because it best answers it's proper end. Consequently, the *propriety* of expression in Prayer, and so the *perfection* of outward Worship, does not consist in any one certain *unvaried Form* of Words, how elegant and correct soever it may be. For, on the contrary,

the

(g) John iv. 24.

the having the *same* or other things differently expressed at different times, is, with due care, the way to have them *most properly* expressed at all times; that is, so as to be most conducive and serviceable to the great ends of Devotion. And upon *this*, not upon any one set Form of Words and Phrases, though chosen with the greatest care and exactness, the propriety of expression in Prayer must always depend.

C O N C L U S I O N.

HAVING now reviewed the *argumentative* part of this *Essay upon Prayer*, it may be proper, before we conclude, to take some notice of the following Paragraph.

“ But neither those, who use Forms, nor
 “ those who use none; nor those who make
 “ use of different ones from each other,
 “ should *censure* and *condemn* one another,
 “ or scruple to *join occasionally* with each o-
 “ ther, so long as nothing, which they *ap-*
 “ *prehend to be sinful*, is forced upon them.”

— In answer to which it may be observed,

(1.) Christians of different Communions, and who worship God in different Ways, doubtless ought to have *Charity* one for another. Because, none of us are quite perfect, or infallible; and those are the *least* so, who pretend to it the most; for that very pretence is a sufficient proof of the contrary. But,

(2.) Not-

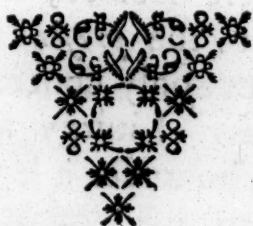
(2.) Notwithstanding this, every Christian ought impartially to judge for himself, and honestly to follow his own judgement, with respect to the Mode or Manner of religious Worship. *Charity* is a good thing; but in all cases *Honesty* should take place before it. And in the present case, every person should be so honest to himself, as to be strictly true, and firmly steady to his own Principles. An honest Man then owes so much regard to his own Character, in point of Consistency, as not to countenance and recommend by his actions, especially his publick actions, what he actually disapproves in his settled judgement; whatever be the *Grounds* of his disapprobation, which must be left to himself. Therefore,

(3.) In some cases, and under some circumstances, great Prudence may be required, in the way and manner of *expressing* our Charity; lest what is meant by us only as an expression of our *Charity*, should be considered by others as a mark and testimony of our approbation. From whence it follows,

(4.) Sometimes, and upon some occasions, it may be very inconvenient and improper, to *join* with others in their Way and Manner of Worship, even “when no-
“ thing, which we *apprehend to be sinful*, is
“ forced upon us.” For, *all things that are lawful, are not always expedient.* 1 Cor. x. 23. Now,

(5.) Upon

(5.) Upon the Principles of Christian Liberty, every Man is the proper judge of the Expediency of his own Actions in this case. If therefore other Persons take upon them to judge for him, and to *censure* and *condemn* him for not following *their* judgement, instead of his *own*; they themselves are the guilty Party, and offend against the Rules of Christian Liberty, Candor, and Charity. Wherefore to conclude in the Words of St. PAUL, Rom. xiv. 13. *Let us not judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no Man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his Brother's way.*



E

A D V E R.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME Thoughts on religious Worship, here taken into Consideration, seem to be the *Conceptions* of One, or more of those Persons, who have been labouring, for years past, to introduce among Protestant Dissenters a New Liturgy; that is to say, a Form of Common Prayer different from that by Law established. But the Writer declares, “I would not be understood, by any thing I have advanced, to object against a *National Church*, or a *National Liturgy*.” Which Declaration the Reader is desired to keep in mind; and likewise to take notice further, that the Argument, here debated, hath intentionally no reference to the *present* National Church or Liturgy; but only concerns the Introduction of *another* Liturgy among Protestant Dissenters; who under a legal Toleration are not obliged to use any publick Forms of Worship, but what they are pleased to impose upon themselves in their separate Congregations. And so the Question here discussed is—Whether taking such a Step would properly be any *improvement* of their present Mode and Manner of Worship, by fixing it upon

upon a more *scriptural*, more *primitive*, and more *eligible* Plan of Devotion — We have endeavoured to maintain the Negative ; and may now in Reason expect, that those, on the contrary side, will either have the Courage to defend, or the Modesty to retract their own Arguments for a Dissenting Liturgy, of *any* kind ; without descending to Particulars at present, or entering into the merits of any New Compositions of that Sort, already extant.

T H E E N D.



LATELY PUBLISHED.

I. **T**HE Scripture Account of PRAYER, in an Address to the Dissenters in *Lancashire*, relating to a New LITURGY. By the late Revd. JOHN TAYLOR, D. D. The Second Edition. Price One Shilling and Sixpence.

II. REMARKS upon a LETTER to a DISSENTING MINISTER, concerning the Expediency of *Stated Forms* OF PRAYER for PUBLIC WORSHIP. Price One Shilling.

III. REMARKS on the CHRISTIAN COMMON-PRAYER-BOOK, or UNIVERSAL LITURGY, Printed 1761. Price Sixpence.



